

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LOUREN 00840 031857Z

43

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FM AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2244

AMEMBASSY LISBON

INFO AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, MZ

SUBJECT: BURGOS PRIESTS SPEAK OUT

REF: (A) LOURENCO MARQUES 823; (B) LISBON 4367

1. SHORTLY BEFORE THEIR RELEASE FROM PRISON, NOTICIAS OF NOVEMBER 23 REPORTED INTERVIEW WITH BURGOS FATHERS MARTIN HERNANDEZ ROBLES AND ALFONSO VALVERDE LEON. PRIESTS WERE EXTREMELY CAUTIOUS AND DID NOT SPEAK OF POLITICS. THEY WERE QUOTED AS SAYING THEY WERE LEAVING WITHOUT HATRED FOR ANYONE, THAT THEY HAVE ALWAYS LIKED PORTUGAL ("ANSIZERIAN COUNTRY LIKE OUR OWN"), AND IF THEY WERE CRITICAL IT WAS "PRECISELY BECAUSE OF OUR GREAT LOVE FOR IT (PORTUGAL)". THEY SAID THEY HAD BEEN TREATED HUMANELY, DISCUSSED CULTURAL ASPECTS OF MOZAMBIQUE AND HOPED THAT EVEN THOUGH NOT POSSIBLE CONTINUE WORKING IN MOZAMBIQUE, THEY BE ALLOWED WORK IN SOME OTHER PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRY.

2. ONCE SAFELY BACK IN SPAIN, HOWEVER, THEY SAID A BIT MORE. JOHANNESBURG STAR OF NOVEMBER 27 REPORTS PRIESTS AS CONFIRMING THEY WERE NEVER BADLY TREATED, TORTURED OR

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PAGE 02 LOUREN 00840 031857Z

THREATENED. "IF WE WERE A BIT DIFFICULT, PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES

RETAILIATED BY STOPPING OUR MAIL AND PRISON VISITS FOR TWO OR THREE MONTHS". PRIESTS REPORTED AS SAYING THEY KNEW OF AT LEAST 100 BLACKS WHO DIED, EITHER THROUGH BEATINGS OR STARVATION, IN THE PRISON. THEY SAID BLACKS WERE TOLD TO SIGN PAPERS SAYING THEY HAD COOPERATED WITH TERRORIST GROUPS OR THEY WOULD BE PUT TO DEATH. FAVORITE TORTURE METHOD WAS TO STARVE MEN FOR FIVE DAYS AND THEN PUT THEM ON VERY SALTY DIET FOR TWO DAYS, THEN DENY THEM ANY WATER FOR ANOTHER THREE DAYS. PRIESTS SAID ABOUT 10,000 BLACKS ARE DETAINED IN MOZAMBIQUE OF WHICH ONLY ABOUT 2 PERCENT HAVE BEEN TRIED, AND ONLY ABOUT 14 DISCOVERED WITH WEAPONS. (,953: BELIEVE PRIESTS CLAIM OF 10,000 DETAINEES BASED ON INFORMATION OBTAINED BY THEIR LAWYER, ADRIAON RODRIGUES, FROM DGS THAT A TOTAL OF TEN THOUSAND PERSONS HAD BEEN ARRESTED BY DGS IN MOZAMBIQUE SINCE BEGINNING OF HOSTILITIES NINE YEARS AGO, OF WHOM ONLY HANDFUL TRIED IN REGULAR OR MILITARY COURTS, BUT MAJORITY OF WHOM HAVE SINCE BEEN RELEASED.) PRIESTS SAID MOST DETAINEES ARE SIMPLE WORKERS, "COUNTRY PEOPLE WHO HAVE JUST BEEN DRAGGED IN ON ANY PRETEXT AND KEPT 12 TO 13 MONTHS WITHOUT EVEN SEMBLANCE OF TRIAL". (NOTE: THIS NOT EXACTLY SO, MANY DETAINEES WERE EMPLOYEES IN LOCAL ENTERPRISES AND MEMBERS OF BLACK URBAN MIDDLE CLASS).

3. COMMENT: SINCE BURGOS FATHERS WERE KEPT IN SEMI-SOLITARY CONFINEMENT MUCH OF THEIR TIME IN PRISON, AT LEAST SOME OF THEIR INFORMATION MUST BE BASED ON HEAR-SAY AND SHOULD BE TAKEN WITH DUE RESERVE. WE HAVE NO HARD EVIDENCE OF SYSTEMATIC TORTURES SUCH AS THOSE DESCRIBED. WE HAVE HEARD ON GOOD AUTHORITY, HOWEVER, THAT SOME PRISONERS WERE KEPT IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT, AND A NUMBER WERE SUBJECTED TO STRENUOUS INTERROGATION, IN WHICH EXHAUSTION AND FEAR PLAYED PART IN INDUCING THEM TO SIGN PHONY CONFESSIONS. WHILE SOME EXCESSES MAY STILL GO ON, IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT TREATMENT OF PRISONERS HAS IMPROVED UNDER NEW DGS ADMINISTRATION.

VAN OSS

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